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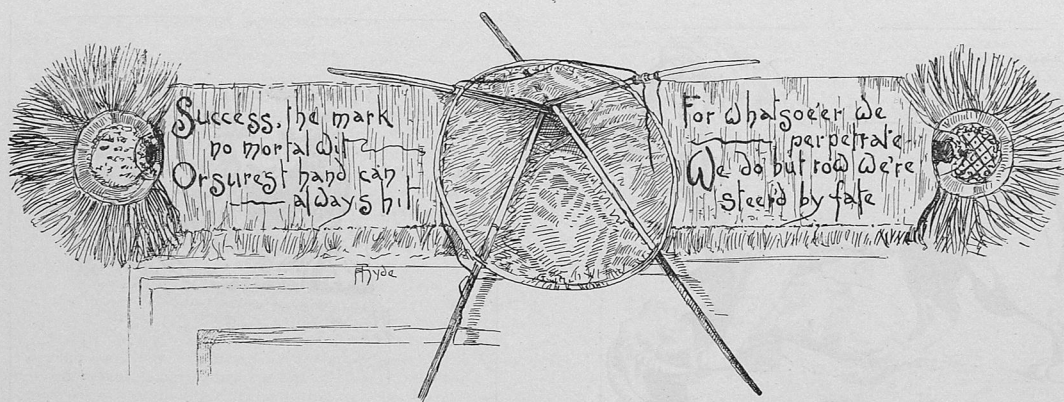
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## THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.



CHINESE MATTING DECORATION FOR WINDOW OF BILLIARD-ROOM, DESIGNED BY HELEN HYDE.

### CHINESE MATTING AS A DECORATIVE MATERIAL.

BY LAURA B. STARR.



CHINESE storm-coats are among the latest novelties used for decoration. These coats are worn by the Chinese laborer to protect him from the weather, and most effectually do they do it: they are made of coarse straw matting, eighteen or twenty inches deep, edged with a short fringe; each upward row overlaps the one below it, so that the rains falls off it as water does off a duck's back. The coats are taken to pieces and

the single strips are used for decorating spaces over windows, mantels, and sometimes they are used for friezes.

The illustration given shows a window decoration in a billiard room: two strips are used, the join in the center being concealed by the pocket and cues. The ends are finished, each with a Cus-cus fan; these fans, although made of root-fibre, have about the same tone as the matting, and with the bit of color in the center make an exceedingly pretty finish. The legends, which may be changed to suit the room, are done with black oil paint.

When this decoration is used over a mantel, the fringe is put at the top and a different motto or legend inscribed thereon; the matting also makes a good background for colored decoration if this is preferred.

When the Chinese storm-coats are not to be had the straw matting which comes around tea-chests may be used instead. The grocer is usually glad enough to give it away. It only requires a little labor, taste and ingenuity to work wonders with it, for there is no material more capable of giving much for little than this same matting if properly used.

First it must be thoroughly washed in strong salt and water, then placed flat under a heavy weight to dry; great care must be taken to make it perfectly smooth, flat and straight, for it is impossible to remove any crookedness or unevenness, except by dampening and pressing. A very sharp knife and ruler are necessary for the cutting; scissors will not do.

A piece of card or bristol-board must always be used for the foundation; this must be cut with care, and the exact size. When the matting is well cut, leaving no ragged ends of straw, the hardest part of the work is done. There is a coarse straw gimp which may be used for a finish to cover the edges, if desired. For window decorations or frieze, the gimp is not at all necessary if the matting is well cut, as when once it is placed on the wall there is little wear and tear to fray it.

For a frieze, two Cus-cus fans, placed centers together, may be used as a center-piece midway between the corners, or they may be used as corner pieces, leaving the centers plain. One mantel seen had two of these fans placed together over the middle of the matting, as well as one at each end. Individual taste must determine the brush decoration according to the room and its occupancy. The matting is especially suitable for music and billiard rooms, for sleeping in the city, or they may be used with good effect throughout a summer cottage.

The tea-chest matting serves as an admirable background for

photographs and other small pictures. A very pretty one seen lately was about twelve inches square, card-board and matting cut the same size and pasted together. Three small photographs of Chinese children, souvenirs of a California trip, were pasted on irregularly; in one corner glowed a bow of gorgeous yellow ribbon. Chinese characters, which to the initiated read, "Peace be with you," were scrawlingly painted between two of the photographs.

The beauty of a cabinet photograph is enhanced by placing it on a background of the matting an inch and a half larger all around than itself; a bow of ribbon may be added if desired.

Picture frames of plain thin wood may be covered with the matting, and handsomely decorated with colors if desired. If the frame enclose the portrait of a fair friend, across one corner might be printed the following apostrophe: "Fair Eyes," "Sweet Lips," "Dear Heart."

A mirror framed with a matting frame was decorated with a running vine of many-colored morning-glories with the accompanying lines:

"Look on this mirror: you will see,  
The one of all most dear to me;  
Oh! would that therein I might view  
The one of all most loved by you."

Handsome portfolios and mouchoir cases are made of the same material. As the matting will not bend without breaking, the two sides must be made separately and the back laced together with ribbons. The matting should be cut an inch larger than the card-board, that it may be turned over and fastened smoothly and strongly on the wrong side, before putting in the lining. A portfolio seen was lined with quilted lavender satin and tied with lavender ribbons. A gorgeous bunch of eschscholtzias, California poppies, was painted on one side, while the owners initials stretched diagonally across the other. Another one was lined with yellow satin and tied with ribbons to match. A delicate blackberry vine, than which nothing lends itself more readily to decoration, with flowers and fruit in all stages of ripening, wandered over one entire side with a handsome monogram on the other. Letter-cases, paper-holders, and a variety of pretty and useful articles may be made from the same material, if the worker has a little ingenuity.

THE STUDENT of even the "small arts" cannot impress it too strongly on his memory that the least of these should have its special province, and avoid entering on that of others. Keep every art by itself. Giulio Clovio was a great artist who painted fine heads in vellum books, but his work was not "illumination." Etching on copper should not ape steel engraving, nor engraving on wood be made to imitate that on metal of any kind. It is no excellence in leather-work when it looks like wood-carving, nor should pictures of a character appropriate to miniature, water color, or oil painting, be introduced on cups and dinner plates. A plate or plaque may, if you will, be hung up as a specimen of decorative art, but it should not, as a dish, be deliberately turned into an object fit for nothing else but to be hung up and made the medium of a portrait, flower-piece, or landscape.

AT LEAST one element of the German character had considerable influence over her pottery work, and that element was their convivial propensity. Perhaps no nation on the earth has produced more pots, mugs, canettes, and jugs, than the nation over which Gambrinus exercises his greatest influence. These were produced mostly in the *grescerame*, or stone ware.